THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) The Government is committed to further enhance bilateral relations and cooperation with Sri Lanka. A meeting of the Indo-Sri Lanka Joint Commission chaired by External Affairs Minister and the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister is proposed to be held in Colombo later this year. Prior to the Joint Commission, it is proposed to convene meetings of the Sub-commissions on Science & Technology and Social, Cultural and Educational Matters in Colombo. The Joint Commission would review the progress made in various spheres of bilateral cooperation and would also identify new areas of cooperation.

(b) Yes Sir, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister paid a two days goodwill visit to India on June 20 and 21, 1996.

(c) In the discussions held with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, both India and Sri Lanka emphasised the high priority given to maintenance of close and cordial bilateral relations. Both sides expressed satisfaction at the present state of bilateral cooperation and agreed that there were possibilities for further enhancing ties. It was agreed that Sri Lanka would host the third session of the Indo-Sri Lanka Joint Commission later this year which would plan improvement of relations in all fields. Discussions were held on improving ties in the economic field. The question of fisheries and problems faced by fishermen of the two countries was also discussed and the two sides agreed to hold consultations to resolve these problems expeditiously

Sea Erosion

433 SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN . Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state

(a) whether the Government have made any assessment of or received any Reports from the Government of Kerala regarding the extent of sea erosion caused by the recent squalls along the west coast,

(b) if so, the details of findings/report, and

(c) the details of relief granted by the Union Government to the State of Kerala in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA) (a) No, Sir

(b) and (c) Does not arise

[Translation]

Opening of Schools in Rural Areas

434 SHRI ANAND RATNA MAURYA Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state

(a) whether the Government have conducted any country-wide survey to find out the number of rural and backward areas where there are no primary schools and the distance the children of the area have to cover to attend school for education;

(b) whether the Government propose to provide schools in those areas on priority basis;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the Government propose to provide financial assistance to the families living below the poverty line for spread of education in such areas; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MUHI RAM SAIKIA) : (a) Yes, Sir. All India Educational Surveys are conducted periodically by States under the aegis of National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to assess the availability of existing schooling facilities at different stages of education. The 6th All India Survey, which has been conducted recently, has ascertained the number of rural habitations without primary schools and the distance-wise availability of primary schools.

(b) and (c). According to available information, 94% of the country's rural population has access to a primary school within one km. of walking distance. The responsibility for establishing primary schools in the unserved and under-served areas lies with the respective State Governments which have evolved their own norms for the purpose in accordance with broad national guidelines

(d) There is no such proposal under consideration of the Ministry.

(e) Does not arise

Pension to Soldiers of Second World War

435. SHRI R B. RAI Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state

(a) whether pension scheme has been introduced for the ex-soldiers who were demobilized after second World War, and

(b) If so, the amount given to them per mensum and the procedures thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU) (a) No. Sir

(b) Question does not arise

[English]

Irrigation Project

436. SHRI RAMCHANDRA VEERAPPA Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state

(a) whether any proposal to modernise certain